



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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*Peter F. Neronha*  
*Attorney General*

October 14, 2020

Mr. Jeffrey Willis, Acting Executive Director  
Coastal Resources Management Council  
Stedman Government Center  
4808 Tower Hill Road  
Wakefield, RI 02879

Re: Public Street Right-of-Way, Providence, Rhode Island

Dear Mr. Willis:

I am writing to express my strong support for the City of Providence's July 28, 2020, request to formally designate the eastern end of Public Street in Providence, between Allens Avenue and the waterfront, as an official CRMC recognized public right-of-way to the Providence waterfront.

The Public Street location historically has been a public access point to the Providence River and Upper Narragansett Bay. The City's tax maps depict the street, so-called "Public", as an unobstructed open roadway running to the water's edge. The Attorney General's review of title documents in the City's Land Evidence Records reveals that adjacent properties acknowledge and reference the "public" street. Members of the public already have accepted the dedication of this street as public through their long and continuous use as a point of access for fishing, boating and recreation along the Providence waterfront.

Unfortunately, the eastern end of Public Street adjacent to the Providence River has been neglected, and neighboring private properties have recently encroached and are now unlawfully obstructing this public right-of-way. An official CRMC designation would reinforce the acceptance of this street as public through official action and further protect the public's right to access and enjoy this waterfront access point permanently.

Public access to Rhode Island's coastal and waterfront resources is a priority mission of this Office, which like the CRMC is empowered to protect the public's rights and interests in accessing our State's coastal resources. But, it is not lost on me and should not be lost on CRMC that all too often when there is talk about the right to access our coastal amenities, usually it is in the context of walking along the shoreline or oceanfront access and not in urban settings. When balancing competing private interests and public access, more often than not, the scales do not tip in the favor of the

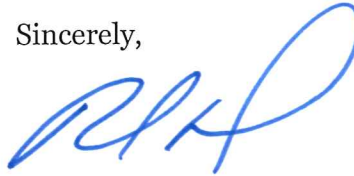
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ordinary urban citizen. Until our lower income communities and our communities of color have equal access to open spaces, and have safe, clean and vibrant waterfront accessibility, we are failing in our duties to protect this most fundamental Rhode Island interest.

Thousands of Rhode Islanders who live in the South Providence and Washington Park neighborhoods have lost almost all public access to the shore and Narragansett Bay along Allens Avenue. The residents of these already over-burdened communities live only a short walk or bike ride from this area of the Providence waterfront, but they cannot access it or enjoy it.

There is sufficient evidence available for the CRMC right-of-way subcommittee to place the City's designation request on the subcommittee agenda and begin a hearing process as soon as possible. I strongly encourage the CRMC right-of-way subcommittee to prioritize this public access designation as an environmental justice matter entitled to expeditious review. Public Street should remain permanently and forever public.

Sincerely,



Peter F. Neronha  
Attorney General

cc: Jennifer Cervenka, Esq., CRMC Council Chairwoman  
Anthony DeSisto, Esq. CRMC Legal Counsel  
Kevin R. Cute, CRMC Marine Resources Specialist  
Jeffrey Dana, Solicitor, City of Providence  
David Everett, Principal Planner, City of Providence